2024
COVID 101
How to Protect Yourself and Others from SARS-CoV-2
For the community by the community

“SARS-CoV-2"
SARS-CoV-2 is Miss Rona’s government name, short for **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2.** Recent studies show it is also a vascular disease meaning that **it can damage any part of the body that has veins or receives blood flow**. It is categorized as a Biosafety Level 3 Pathogen, which puts it in the same category as Yellow Fever, West Nile Virus, the Bird Flu, and Tuberculosis. Like HIV, COVID depletes our T-cells, one of our body’s vital immune system defenses. **COVID can affect people of ALL AGES.** COVID has been observed to cause organs to age faster, cognitive decline, reduce fertility, immune dysregulation, and chronic inflammation. COVID can also trigger autoimmune conditions, diabetes, blood clots, and reactivate dormant viruses in our bodies such as herpes or Epstein-Barr. She‘s very ambitious...

COVID is Airborne
SARS-CoV-2 is spread by exhaled aerosols, which are *much* smaller than droplets or spit. For example, smoke is made up of aerosols. Like smoke, aerosols spreads outdoors and much further than 6 ft. **COVID can also stay in the air indoors for hours.** It is estimated that the risk of transmission indoors is 20 times higher than outdoors. And just like smoke, unless you do something to get rid of them, they just get thicker in concentration.

Long COVID is a dire emergency
Long COVID is lingering symptoms from your COVID infection that last longer than 12-16 weeks, sometimes months or years. **COVID is a mass-disabling event.** Long COVID can affect two people differently because COVID can impact any and all systems of the body. Common LC symptoms include:

- Intense fatigue, worsening of symptoms after physical or mental effort, fever
- Respiratory and heart: Chronic Cough, Breathlessness, Chest Pain, Fast heart rate, blood clots, heart conditions
- Neurological: difficulty thinking/concentrating (brain fog), insomnia, headache, depression, anxiety, pins & needles feeling, dizziness/vertigo
- Digestive: nausea, diarrhea, low appetite, stomach problems
- Other: chronic pain, rashes, changes in menstrual cycles, loss of smell/taste, development of autoimmune conditions

Every time you are infected, you are at higher risk of developing Long COVID. **1 in 10 infections can lead to Long COVID** and those chances increase with each infection. Most people develop LC after a mild or asymptomatic infection. **Long COVID symptoms in children** vary across age groups, ranging from fatigue, poor appetite, low energy, dizziness, persistent stuffy nose/cough in kids to panic attacks in teens. Recognizing these differences is essential for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Black, Latine, Indigenous, and Trans people are disproportionately impacted by Long COVID and less likely to get diagnosed or treated due to discrimination, racism, and lack of access to care.

There is no "Vax and Relax"

The immunity protection from your vaccine's antibodies wane after 6-9 months, so consider getting updated boosters as soon as they're available to you. **There is no such thing as herd immunity** with the nature of this virus**.** SARS-CoV-2 is constantly mutating, creating highly infectious variants that evade vaccine protection . **You can still get infected** and then re-infected a week later with a different variant. While vaccines can protect you from hospitalization and death, they do not prevent the spread or absolutely prevent Long COVID. **Use vaccines as a part of a multi-layered prevention strategy.**

Most infections are Asymptomatic

49% COVID cases are asymptomatic, meaning you may not know if you're actually sick and you can spread it unknowingly. **Asymptomatic infections are just as severe** and does not remove your risk of Long COVID. Protect yourself and others by taking multilayered preventions: Two-way masking, HEPA air filtration, ventilation, up-to-date vaccines, test before meet-ups, and watch wastewater data to plan accordingly, just like you do with the weather.

COVID Symptoms

Latest variants in 2024 have manifested different symptoms besides "sore throat" or "loss of taste and smell"

- Diarrhea
- Pink Eye
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fatigue
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Muscle aches
- Fever or chills
- Allergy-like symptoms:
    - Runny nose
    - Congestion
    - itchy eyes

Previously, SARS-COV2 was known to have an incubation time of 2 weeks. That is not the case anymore. A recent variant of interest, JN.1, has a shorter incubation time: 3-5 days. This can affect your COVID test results, so make sure you're testing more than once!

Mask up!

As an airborne virus, it most commonly enters the body through inhalation. Well-fitting **KN95, KF94, and N95 masks are really effective against getting or spreading COVID,** and even MORE effective when more than 1 person is masked. Use a mask that can both:

- Filter out >94% of airborne particles from being breathed in
- Fits and seals snugly on your face - **no air gaps!** If air goes out, air can go in. Adjust your mask or try out different types of masks to find your perfect fit.

Unfortunately, loose blue surgicals only filter ~40% airborne particles. Cloth masks perform even worse!! You can improve the performance of a surgical mask with mask tape, a mask brace, or layer with a snug-fitting cloth mask (which increases filtration to 60%). **The best mask is the one that fits you best and that you will reliably wear!** Reach out to your local mask bloc for free N95s and other mask-related resources.

If you are reading a printout, scan this QR code to view as a printable PDF with a reference page.
Or visit tinyurl.com/covid101brochure

Multiple Layers of Prevention
Do more than “wash your hands” against an airborne virus!
Wear a Mask

- **Upgrade** to a high filtration mask that fit tightly to your face. ex: KF94, KN95s, N95
- **Make adjustments for a secure fit**: pinch nose wire, use both straps above head for N95s, use strap extenders for ear loops, mask tape, staple the chin area tighter, or add nose foam. Surgicals can be improved with a mask brace. Remember: NO AIR GAPS!
- **Save money and re-use!** Many (K)N95s have a lifespan of 40-50 hours. Let it self-sterilize between uses by storing it in a paper bag for 3-5 days. Discard mask when it becomes damp, stained, or the fit loosens.

Nasal Sprays + CPC Mouthwash
Nasal Sprays (Xylitol, Iota-Carrageenan) & mouthwashes (with .08%+ CPC) can be a good added layer to reduce viral load in your throat or nasal passages. Active ingredients kill viruses and can affect the microbiome of the upper respiratory tract, making it hard for the virus to take hold and replicate. Use before & after high risk activities or in your first days of infection. Side effects of using these too much (daily) include yellowing teeth (mouthwash) and damage nasal lining (nasal spray), so do your research or consult your doctor first.

Clean the air: HEPA filtration
Air Purifiers with HEPA filters, or “high efficiency particulate air” can remove particles & viruses from the air. You want 6 ACH (air changes an hour) so that every 10 minutes your purifier brings you fresh air. You can DIY a powerful air purifier, called a Corsi-Rosenthol, with a box fan+HEPA filter for as low as $40 with parts from your local hardware store. Check out cleanairstars.com for more info on air purifiers.

Be mindful of Indoor CO2 Levels
COVID spreads via exhaled breath so measuring with a CO2 monitor can help assess high risk of infection and air ventilation. High CO2 also increases virus’s lifetime in the air. At 3000ppm, 30% of the virus in the air stops decaying, creating an environment for mass-infection. Open windows, add an air purifier, do not break your mask’s seal, or even leave the space. Learn more at itsairborne.com

Learn how to test correctly
Many variables can affect the accuracy of your COVID test such as the type of test, how you swab for your sample, your viral load, or the timing of your test. RATs can

best pick up the infection on the 3rd-4th day of exposure or symptom onset. The FDA also now recommends to test every 48 hours to ensure an accurate negative result.

Throat-Cheek-Nose Swab
info from Newlevant COVID Zine and Ontario Health Canada

Improve test accuracy by collecting a combined nose and throat sample!*

1. Do not eat, smoke or drink anything 30 minutes before taking a rapid antigen test.
2. Blow your nose first and cough. Disinfect hands (wash or sanitizer)
3. Insert swab to the inner cheek, turn swab a few times or
4. Softly rub the swab as far back in your throat as you feel comfortable.
5. Tilt head back and fully insert the soft swab tip straight back (not up) into your nose until you hit resistance (up to 2.5 cm). Rotate swab several times against the wall of the nose and let sit for a few seconds to absorb nasal secretions. Do this for both nostrils.
6. Follow your RAT instructions to process the sample and read results

Try not to move the cassette. Read results promptly in bright light - sometimes a positive test will show up in very faint lines. If you're in the US, submit your results to MakeMyTestCount.org. **Do not use this method with Intelliswab RATs, it will produce false positives*

Types of COVID Tests
Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT)

- **What is it?** These tests work by detecting the N-protein of COVID. Mutations on the virus spike doesn't impact accuracy of positive rapid tests.
- Positive results on a rapid tests are very accurate. However, a **negative results are only 28% reliable** as the tests are not very good at picking up new variants. So, repeat testing is needed to improve test accuracy to up to **68%**. Repeat the test 2 more times 48 hours apart.

Molecular Tests (PCR/NAAT)

- **What is it?** Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and Nucleic Acid Amplification Tests (NAATs) can multiply and detect the virus's genetic material (RNA), making it highly sensitive with few false negatives
- **At-Home Molecular tests:** Almost as effective as lab-based PCR testing, these tests can detect COVID at even low virus loads with 88.3%-100% accurate test results! If you have the funds, consider purchasing an at-home molecular test for results you can rely on.

Connect with your local mask bloc or mutual aid group for free masks, tests, current info, and SARS-CoV-2 safer events

Social Connections
covidactionmap.org
covidmeetups.com
covid-chemistry.org
bit.ly/third_place_hangout
linktr.ee/disabilit4t
refreshconnections (app)

reddit.com/r/ZeroCovidCommunity

COVID Resources
data.wastewaterscan.org (U.S.)
pmc19.com/data (U.S. wastewater data)
WHN.global
yalemedicine.org
cleanairstars.com
COVID.tips
johnsnowproject.org
covidnow.info
PeoplesCDC.org (U.S.)
youhavetoliveyour.life
drgalland.com
pandemicpatients.org
newlevant.com/COVIDzine
reddit.com/r/masks4all
Doctor Lucky Tran on Instagram
okdoomer.io/a-covid-faq-with-300-sources
linktr.ee/buymasks (U.S.)

Advocacy
maskbloc.org/
bit.ly/lesscovid
PeoplesCDC.org (U.S.)
CleanAirCrew.org
pandemicequityinitiative.com
tinyurl.com/DJ10Principles
pandemicsolidarity.org
covidactionmap.org
resistcovideugenics.carrd.co
longcovidjustice.org
covidsafecampus.org
berlinbuyersclub.com

Other
covidconsciousthерapists.com (U.S.)
covidsafeproviders.com/states (U.S.)

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by Janet Hernandez. Inspired by covidhelp.org and COVID IS A MASS DISABLING EVENT zine by ThePeoplesDoctor. Many thanks to the feedback and contributions from Elliott Maya, Gata, comunistdadisca (Spanish translation), Maskbloc LA and Maskbloc Long Beach. Updated every ~4 months. Interested in translating to another language? Contact covid101brochure@gmail.com
We Keep Us Safe!